

## *Praying with the Sons of Pitches*

Christ the Redeemer Church  
August 15, 2010  
12<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost/Green

Luke 12:49-56  
Rev Gary L. Smith  
[www.christredeemerchurch.com](http://www.christredeemerchurch.com)

“I did not come to earth to bring peace but to bring division.” So much for Peace on Earth and Good Will toward men, huh? The beauty of going by the discipline of the Lectionary readings each week is that we are forced to deal with tough scriptures that we would otherwise ignore and just stick to the nice, easy teachings.

Any scripture taken to an extreme is not the Gospel. Today’s reading is one of those really hard to understand sayings of Jesus. Jesus, in today’s scripture, says that He did not come to unite but to divide families and friends.

You do not understand that scripture until you try to do right or until you start a new church in a small town or until you try to raise a child right or until you go into politics.

Some such endeavors require us to value Right over Peace and Unity.

This verse is hard to understand only because we would like to think that the Gospel is a simple message. The Gospel is about doing right.

Sometimes doing the right things means you give up your stained glass sanctuary. Sometimes doing the right things means you risk you business to separate from your business clients at church and start a church that values children, values inclusiveness, values Hospitality, takes seriously how you welcome visitors, values new ideas and new people, values the ministry of softball as an outreach in the community, values the work of all members of the congregation, embraces the idea of Serving people in the community, values the discipline of subjecting yourself to the study of the Lectionary readings each week even when the readings are hard like this morning’s reading.

Sometimes doing the right thing means a pastor gives up a nice church building and office and a prestigious title and nice salary and a staff of 12 to go help set up chairs for two years in a skating rink...all for the Gospel. While he has a kid in college.

Lindsey Laughhunn is a great pastor and a brain of a man. Turned down a full scholarship in Nuclear Engineering to go into ministry. He worked for me in the military chaplaincy back during the 9/11 days. Got out of the chaplaincy a few years ago. He now works in Hospice in Virginia. I congratulated him on his new position a few years ago and asked him “How many staff members do you have working for you?”

He said, “None. I have no staff. My goal in life is to never again having anybody work for me and to never again manage a staff member.” Now that is a secure and smart man! He sits with people as they die and he helps them to die with dignity.

Jesus did not set out to make peace when he told the men who were about to stone the woman caught in adultery “Those of you without sin may cast the first stone.” Jesus stood for right. He was not standing for Peace that day. He was saving the life of a woman and telling others to act right. He demanded that people be treated rightly, even women. He took children upon his lap, even when the adult men ridiculed him.

Jesus did not set out to make friends when he threw over the money tables in the temple and told the church leaders that they were more concerned about money than about treating people properly. He was not after Peace and unity. He was after Right.

He was born in a dirty manger to a scared young teenage girl. It was not a clean, pristine story. Oh, some angels got involved to later make it all sound nice and peaceful and sweet but the Birth of Jesus was a normal, dirty, smelly, confusing, bewildering, hopeless, lost-in-the-crowd-of-life birth in that barn. Dr. Luke and others cleaned up the story a lot for us so we would read it and celebrate it...but at its core it was raw human life. And after the birth, the new mother and father and baby all had to run for their lives. No baby shower for Mary. Life swirled out of control for that unmarried teenage new mother. Life is one crisis after another for Mary and Joseph...just like our life is.

I made some mistakes this week. When you talk and type as much as I do, then you make many mistakes. Church members forgave me this week when I made the comment to a young couple that “divorce will rob your child of his future.”

One recent divorcee in our church immediately called me and emailed me and demanded to talk about that comment. She said, “I saved my child by getting a divorce.”

I told her I agreed with her totally. She had saved her child by getting a divorce in an abusive marriage. My comments were to a specific situation...not to all situations. The lady forgave me and said, “Oh, that was just our Rev Gary being his raw human self. We love him. And sometimes we just ignore him.”

That made my week. I need to be ignored sometimes.

Jesus never said to every person “Go sell everything you have and give it to the poor if you want to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.” He only said that to the proud man who kept insisting to Jesus that he was perfect. Watch what you tell God!

We played the Sons of Pitches softball team in the city tournament this past Tuesday night. They are a good team. We beat them Sons of Pitches 23-9. I could not wait until after the game when we all shook hands on the pitcher’s mound. I then said, “Hey, you Sons of Pitches want to pray with us?”

So those Sons of Pitches kneeled with the Redeemers and we all prayed together. After the war of the game was over, we prayed with the Sons of Pitches. There was Peace

then...and some embarrassment and laughter also.

Ministry and life ain't clean and pristine. We live and play with the Sons of Pitches. I love it. Amen.